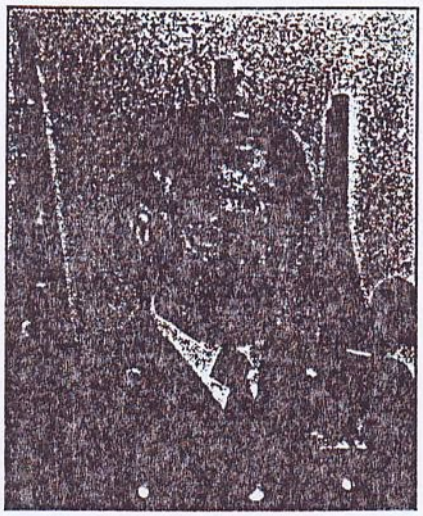
UFO Chronicle

The Mussolini UFO Files

Once again the annual international UFO Symposium in San Marino was a resounding success. Some 40 speakers from about 17 countries and an audience of 600 or so Italians and Europeans filled the three floors of the Teatro Turismo last June in this picturesque, tiny republic in central Italy. The theme of the Eighth World Symposium was "UFO and Power: Politics, Science and Information," coordinated by sociologist Roberto Pinotti, Italy's leading UFO author and director of CUN (National Ufological Center, now the world's largest civilian UFO research organization).

The symposium's main surprise was the official participation of Col. Aldo Olivero, head of the Italian Air Force's General Security Section, who is currently in charge of collecting UFO reports. It was the first time an Italian military officer gave a speech at a UFO conference. Col. Olivero was wearing a uniform and was accompanied by two junior officers who manned the transparencies of the official UFO questionnaire and some statistics covering the 1979 to 2000 period. We must clarify that this is not a large-scale study. Only 215 UFO reports have been collected in the last 20 years. The majority (52 percent) came from police and *carabinieri* (similar to the French Gendarmerie or U.S. state troopers), 29 percent from private citizens, and the rest from various military and civil aviation sources.

Col. Olivero read a carefully worded speech which avoided any minefields, such as the origin of the objects, whether they are potentially hostile, what data is kept secret and which disclosed, etc. The existence of an official Italian air force UFO reporting system was known since at least 1978, when CUN received the first declassified military UFO dossier, which was published in its magazine *UFO Notizario* (*UFO News*). I published a summary of the Italian findings in the 1996 MUFON UFO Symposium Proceedings. But what counted here was the symbolism of the uniformed military officer speaking at a public UFO symposium.



Col. Aldo Olivero of the Italian Air Force addressing the San Marino UFO Symposium

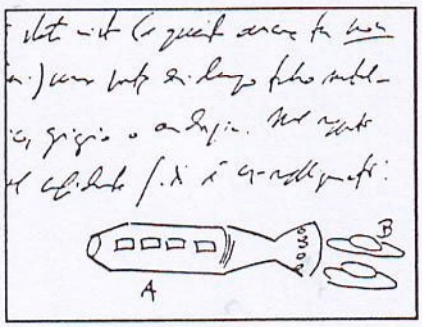
Roberto Pinotti, director of CUN and coordinator of the San Marino UFO Symposium

Roberto Pinotti remarked, "We hope this presentation by the Air Force is the first step. It was a unique circumstance. I think this is the beginning of a new trend."

Indeed, Col. Olivero's San Marino lecture seemed to follow exactly the same pattern of the Chilean Air Force sponsored UFO Symposium at an aeronautical Expo in Santiago last April, reported exclusively in my previous column, and which was the subject of my own presentation in San Marino.

Italy's Fascist "X-Files"

Pinotti and Alberto Lisoni, another CUN researcher and writer, gave a lecture on the sensational discovery of alleged "X-Files" going back to the 1930s, when Italy was ruled by the Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini. Copies of 18 secret documents from the Fascist era (handwritten notes and telegrams), as well as a forensic report authenticating the papers, were released by CUN to the Italian media last April 2. It received considerable coverage in Italy, including the national TV network RAI and leading newspapers like *il Resto del Carlino*, *La Nazione* and *La Repubblica*. Although these articles were posted in Italian on the web, the Mussolini UFO documents were hardly noticed by the American UFO community, so this is the first time the full story is told in any detail outside Italy.



One of the Fascist documents about "aeromobiles"

With its anonymous postings and references to a mysterious, super secret "Cabinet RS/33," supposedly in charge of collecting, investigating and suppressing UFO data, this story has many similarities to the MJ-12 saga, as Lisoni points out in his articles for *Notiziario UFO*. But there are significant differences. The main one is that the Italian documents received anony-

mously in the mail by Pinotti, starting in 1996, were originals and not photocopies or undeveloped film, as in the various MJ-12 drops to Shandera, Berliner and Tim Cooper. The difference between an original and a copy is pivotal since it allows forensic analysis of the paper, typewriter ink, aging process, and so on. Antonio Garavaglia, a top Italian forensic consultant, conducted tests on the Mussolini papers—but we are getting ahead of our story.

It all began in early 1996 when Roberto Pinotti received a handful of handwritten notes on stationery bearing the seal of the "Kingdom's Senate." (Mussolini ruled Italy with an iron grip, nominally under the king). The year is 1936 and the secret agent uses simply a first name "Andrea" (Andrew in Italian) and also includes a sketch of the "mysterious airship."

"It was sighted in the morning (and not in the evening) of Monday—he writes—it was a metallic disc, polished and reflecting light, with a length of ten or twelve meters. Two fighters from a near base took off, but were not able to reach it even at 130 km/h. It didn't emit sound, which would lead one to consider an aerostat. But nobody knows of balloons that can fly faster than the wind. I know for sure that it was seen by other aviation pilots...it [report] has arrived to the hands of Ciano."

Count Ciano was Mussolini's son-in-law and Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs; he was later executed after participating in the cabal to overthrow the Duce and surrender to the Allies in 1943. Andrea's report continues:

"Then, after approximately at least an hour and after passing over Mestre, it was seen as a sort of metallic tube, gray or slate." A drawing by a confidential informant was redrawn by Andrea, who explained that "'A' was described like a kind of aerial torpedo, with very clear windows...and alternating white and red lights. 'B' were two 'hats,' two hats like those used by priests: wide, round, with a dome in the center, metallic and following the torpedo without changing their relative positions."

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Cover of the March 2000 issue of CUN's *Notiziario UFO*, which broke the story of the Fascist X-Files.

The document mentions that "the Prefecture has opened an inquiry, but you can imagine that it will make little inroad and will have a similar outcome to that of '31. The Duce has expressed his worries, because he says that if it were a matter of real English or French aircraft, his foreign policy would have to start all over again."

Although Andrea's report is only one of several received since 1996, you can see that its contents are sensational—they describe a classic flying saucer report with aircraft scramble and multiple witnesses in 1936! It also discloses that Mussolini and

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Ciano, Italy's number one and two leaders at the time, were intimately appraised of the situation. Indeed, other caches of documents received, always anonymously, by CUN and the newspaper *il Resto del Carlino*, mention a mysterious department known as "Cabinet RS/33." It was charged with both investigating and covering up what the documents call "unconventional aircraft" or "aeromobiles."

Cabinet RS/33 had links with the Fascist secret police OVRA and with "Agenzia Stefani," the regime's news agency in charge of disseminating Fascist propaganda. Italy's most famous scientist and inventor, Guglielmo Marconi, was the director of the Cabinet, which also included several other prominent Italian astronomers, scientists and aeronautical engineers.

When the war began, the Cabinet's secrets were shared with and literally shipped to Nazi Germany. As Lisoni points out, rumors of Nazi discs have plagued the UFO literature for decades, and one Italian scientist, Belluzzo, is always mentioned in conjunction with the Germans Miethe, Schriever and Habermohl.

Much nonsense has been written about the so-called Nazi flying saucers—some of it unabashed neo-Nazi propaganda—yet undoubtedly there is at least some truth to the matter. The names of Miethe, et al., are confirmed by FBI and other U.S. and German documents.

Forensic and Historical Analysis

Are the "Fascist X-Files" authentic? To Pinotti, Lisoni, and the CUN, they appear so. To the investigators' credit, however, the whole affair was kept strictly confidential until Antonio Garavaglia's forensic analysis was completed. Only then were the documents released to the Italian press and published in a series of articles beginning with the March issue of *UFO Notiziario*. Garavaglia conduced a series of chemical tests of the paper and ink—remember he had originals and not copies—and he concluded they seemed authentic handwritten documents from the Fascist era. The color of the paper and ink aging process led him to believe they were genuine and not modern forgeries.

Lisoni also consulted with Andrea Bedetti, a historian and expert on Italy's Fascist period. "I cannot exclude the real existence of a Cabinet RS/33," said Bedetti. He also examined the documents vis-à-vis "the lexicon and the bureaucratic style of the period," as well as the stationery ("Kingdom's Senate" and Stefani agency telegrams) and aeronautical terminology utilized. Bedetti found that all of it was consistent with genuine Fascist-era documents. This didn't rule out a skilled forger, but it would have to be someone deeply knowledgeable of Fascist style, vocabulary and terminology. Bedetti also pointed out that in the period 1933-40—coinciding with the alleged Cabinet RS/33—Mussolini's power was at his peak and Italy was one of the world's leading nations in aviation and military aeronautics.

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Finally, Lisoni dug up a cryptic reference from a speech by Mussolini on February 23, 1941, when the Duce stated: "It's more likely that the United States will be invaded by unknown but warlike inhabitants from the planet Mars, who will come down from the starry space on unimaginable flying fortresses, than from the soldiers of the Axis." What was the Duce trying to say? The story of the Fascist X-Files is still unfolding…if in the end they turn out to be real, then the whole history of ufology will have to be revised.

J. Antonio Huneeus reports on ufology and Fortean subjects for publications and television programs around the world.

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